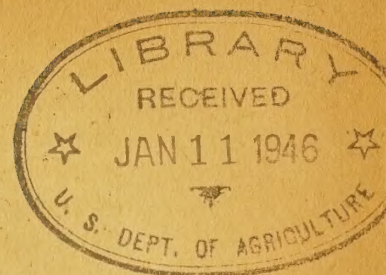


CASE STUDY IN EXTENSION EDUCATION

Better Furniture for the Home in Georgia
Through the Making of Foot Stools

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I. The Objective and Problem (Before 1939)

To improve furniture in the homes of Georgia farm families because the people have not been able to buy sufficient new furniture nor to have the old furniture repaired in shops.

II. The Extension Job

To carry out a program in furniture crafts with the white farm families in 100 counties that will (a) improve home furnishings, (b) improve family living, (c) teach homemakers the basic principles of upholstering and (d) improve standards of handicraft workmanship.

III. The Situation

The average white home in the rural area is the frame type building of the bungalow or cottage type. Most of the homes are rather small for the families. There is an average of 4 rooms in Georgia farm homes and an average of 4 people in the families. Therefore, they do not have adequate space and furnishings in them to facilitate the most comfortable family living and satisfactory entertaining. There has been noticeable evidence of a desire to improve them. In the people's effort to improve their homes, some additional furniture has been bought, though money was scarce. Much of the furniture came from the second-hand stores. Of course, the second-hand overstuffed furniture which was bought for the living rooms was soiled, and in many cases the springs in it were broken down. Therefore, it did not actually add very much comfort and beauty to the home. It was seldom that a home had enough chairs in it, especially the suitable sizes for the small children. About fifty percent of the people had chair frames which were stored away in the attic or barn because they were in need of repair. Old furniture handed down from ancestral families had been pushed aside because of the need of reupholstering or repair. Yet, few people had the knowledge and skill to make the necessary repairs. Most of them have had no experience or training in upholstering.

IV. The People

A high percentage of the white farm people of Georgia are descendants of the Scotch, Irish and English settlers of the State. Between 1930 and 1939 the incomes of many had reached a low ebb. There were families with incomes of \$100 per year per capita to \$1500 per year per capita, or more. The greatest number were of the \$200 to \$300 per capita group. Most of them are ambitious and industrious. The majority of them did their own

housekeeping work and some of them assisted with the farm work. They are very hospitable people who enjoy entertaining in their homes. They believe in keeping up with the desirable trends of social and economic life which is representative of their section of the country. Therefore, they make an effort to live as comfortably as their income will allow. This is evidenced by the 37,000 or more home demonstration club and 99,000 4-H Club members as they carry on the cooperative extension program.

V. The Solution

As the county home agent had observed the problem, she thought the best solution was to teach the people to do their own reconditioning of furniture. Individual assistance had already been given, but this was a slow method of reaching all the people who needed help. To do this on a large scale it was necessary to build up confidence among the homemakers to tackle such a complicated job.

This was done through a related activity which gave the fundamental principles of upholstering and fulfilled one of the needs in home furnishings. This activity was that of making upholstered footstools.

As many as fifteen or twenty homemakers (the average attendance at community meetings) could be supervised at a time, thus giving an opportunity for large numbers in each county to get experience in this craft in a relatively short period of time. This gave each person a finished product to take home with her.

VI. Extension Program

After a conference with the home agents, the home industries specialist worked out a suitable pattern of a footstool and made a stool to use for illustrative material. A mimeographed sheet containing the drawing of a finished stool, the cutting pattern for the leg of the stool, the bill of material and a list of equipment needed was prepared. Training courses for home agents in the home industries emphasis counties were held. In each of these the specialist gave the demonstration, then supervised a work period in which the agents made their own stools. All this was in preparation for leader training meetings in the counties.

The home demonstration agents then presented the idea to the club groups by showing the stool she had made and discussing the plans for work meetings. Two or three leaders from each community group were invited to attend this work meeting and make a stool in order that they might assist the home agent in giving the demonstration in the community clubs, then individual club members afterwards.

In most cases the woodwork for all the stools for a group was cut in a local shop, but each club member assembled her own. In some cases the specialist went to the counties and assisted the agent with the leader training groups. Time was too limited to assist with all. After the leader training work meeting, the home demonstration agent gave the demonstration in each community group. If time permitted, she held a work meeting in each community group. In either case, it was necessary to use the services of the leaders who were previously trained to get a good job done in the communities.

At the work meetings the demonstration was given in segments. After each segment the people worked, under supervision, on their own stools.

News stories of work meetings which were published in local papers created interest in communities where this work had not been done, but personal contact was the most valuable method of creating enthusiasm for this particular activity. As the people visited among each other and saw the stools, those who did not have one, wanted one. This developed much activity in neighborhood groups with club members helping each other.

VII. Results of the Program

When the stools were placed in the homes, they usually showed up the chairs or sofas which needed freshening. This led to much slip covering and re-upholstering. Then the program expanded. Though there were no springs in the stools, the people learned the other principles of upholstering and were willing to tackle the larger pieces of furniture. If they needed help on it, they got it, but they had the incentive to work at it. In 1939 the specialist made her sample stool to be used for illustrative material and gave only a few demonstrations. The agents were interested but were dubious of their ability to carry the program to their communities. With help and encouragement of the specialist they tried out a few work meetings. No figures on the number of tools made in the State in 1939 were obtained that year. In 1940 reports did not show how many stools were made, but they showed the number of pieces of furniture repaired.

Year	No. Counties Participating	Footstools Made	Sofas and Chairs Reupholstered and Repaired
1940	54	(Figures not given in Co.Rpt	1,538
1941	72 61	2,457	1,883
1942	82	2,798	5,457
1943	90 89	2,466	3,027
1944	(Figures not available at this time)		

There were 29,968 pieces of furniture made or reconditioned from 1939 to 1943.

Even though incomes were higher in 1940, the war conditions made it necessary to continue a reclaiming old furniture program.

VIII. Significance of the Case

Even though a footstool may not be the most essential part of home furnishings, the promotion of the upholstered footstool activity was a step toward improving the home and the family living conditions.

The limiting factors of the program:

1. The working groups had to be limited in order to get a good finished product. Therefore, large numbers of people could not be reached rapidly.
2. It was difficult to buy lumber, also to get shop work done after the U. S. entered the war.

The activity succeeded because:

1. There was a need for such an article as the footstool in most homes
 - A. For use to rest ones feet on.
 - B. For small children to sit on.
 - C. For adult people to sit on when:
 - a. warming back before an open fire.
 - b. building fires in the fireplace.
 - c. straightening out the lower dresser drawers or book shelves.
 - d. putting on shoes.
 - D. For completion of furniture groups in a room.
2. The construction of the article was simple enough that even the most inexperienced person was not afraid to attempt to make it.
3. The club members saw a finished stool before the work meeting; therefore, they knew what they were working for.
4. It could be made at various costs; therefore, people of all economic classes could afford one. (The cheapest one was made at a cost of 15¢ - the most expensive one for \$2.00.)
5. The quality of the finished product was creditable. It was substantial, neat, attractive and colorful.
6. The information given in the demonstration was applicable to other home improvement activities. (Fundamental principles of upholstering were taught.)
7. The article was simple enough and small enough to make possible group participation in the meetings.

Success in the making of this footstool was the source of incentive to attempt more difficult skills in this subject; therefore, the larger pieces of furniture were reupholstered. The enthusiasm among the club members was contagious in the community; therefore, those members who had not been active became interested and came back and new members joined the club.

Those who were not accustomed to doing handicraft work of this type found that they could actually do it; therefore, they had courage to try again.

They were quite pleased to have the finished articles to take home with them because it was visible evidence of their accomplishments which they could show to their families.

The work meetings provided quite a pleasant social occasion. The people assisted each other with certain parts of the work and exchanged ideas and suggestions with each other.

